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# MILITARY PREPAREDNESS.

BY MAJOR-GENERAL WILLIAM H. CARTER, U.S.A.

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"We should have an army so organized as to be capable in time of emergency, in co-operation with the national militia and under the provisions of a proper national volunteer law, rapidly to expand into a force sufficient to resist all probable invasion from abroad, and to furnish a respectable expeditionary force, if necessary, in the maintenance of our traditional American policy, which bears the name of President Monroe."—*Inaugural address of President Taft.*

A WELL-BALANCED distribution of the influence of nations will, in the future as in the past, depend upon the ability of each to guard its interests. It is profitless to indulge in academic discussions as to the barbarity of expending national wealth upon fleets and armies, so long as those countries possessing these essentials of military preparedness continue to be the centres of the world's wealth in treasure, science and the arts. A nation blessed with boundless resources and with the energy necessary to develop them has all the crude elements of military strength. Given unlimited time, the multiplication of battleships and the creation of armies would follow along normal lines. Such a business-like proceeding is not apt to obtain, however, in these modern days.

If a nation could be committed to war only by its rulers and well-poised statesmen, there would be reasonable ground to expect that war would never be declared without preparedness. Under the influence of an inspired or hysterical press, however, public opinion may become inflamed, and masquerading as patriotism exercise an irresistible pressure upon those in authority. Not infrequently those who in peace have been the most indifferent to the duty of preparation become the most impatient for war.

History ever repeats itself. Washington had a serious time

from start to finish, in his efforts to secure approval of his recommendations for the nationalization of the Revolutionary Army and the conduct of that struggle on a business basis. Called again to the head of the army in 1798, when war with France seemed inevitable, Washington found the Congress more amenable, but conditions still continued such that the avoidance of war was a source of deep satisfaction to him and to the country at large.

The preparation for and conduct of the War of 1812 was a severe shock to the nation's pride. Out of several campaigns checkered with humiliation and shame came the employment of one of Napoleon's most distinguished French engineers, General Simon Bernard, to whom the country is deeply indebted for the designs of the older fortifications which gave protection to our extended seacoast for half a century.

Practical experience against Indians, and the knowledge of the art of war disseminated through the Military Academy at West Point, enabled the army to plan and execute the campaigns in Mexico in a manner deserving of far more recognition than has usually been accorded to that war. The experience of the younger generation in the Mexican campaigns was of infinite value in the Civil War, but the military system based upon experience gained in the war with Mexico, and the subsequent operations of a small army of 10,000 men, disclosed many palpable defects when applied to the administration of an army of more than 2,000,000 men.

No other nation has been so lavish in expenditure for the preservation of historical records of its greatest war or so generous in making them available for students. Rivers of ink have been used in explaining the details of the various campaigns and battles, as well as the political situations which made the Civil War inevitable. How painful it is to learn from these records that, notwithstanding the enthusiastic orations of the *men* of 1860 and 1861, the great war was fought by the *boys*, whose priceless blood was poured out upon a hundred battle-fields and of whom a vast proportion were too young to vote on any of the great questions of the day.

At the outbreak of the war with Spain nearly all of those in positions of authority were veterans of the Civil War, and it was but natural that the methods which obtained in the latter conflict

should have been once more applied. It had been forgotten that some of the most capable and experienced generals of the Civil War had expressed the opinion that the system under which they had labored was seriously defective and had advocated reform in many matters before the real experience of that war should be forgotten. The war with Spain and the long period of active service, in widely separated countries following in its wake, have added many laurels and experiences to those already gained by the army. Uniform success over an unprepared enemy has, however, served to lull the nation into a sense of security not in harmony with the existing state of the world's unrest and commercial rivalry.

In the presence of grave emergencies, no other nation has been more prodigal than America of its wealth for military and naval purposes. In normal times, however, there is no more thankless task than that of endeavoring to prove to one's fellow citizens that we should not only preserve the excellent features of past military systems, but also bend our efforts to avoid the humiliating experiences of our forebears.

The records show conclusively that the theory that every citizen of the Republic stands ready to march to its defence is wholly fallacious. Even if true, there would still remain the lamentable fact that mere readiness does not carry with it actual fitness.

Basing their opinions upon the results of all our previous experience in war, there are many patriotic men who doubt the wisdom of some recent militia legislation, especially that which forbids the calling out of any volunteers until after the organized militia has been called into service. The country is now committed to this policy, however, and if the enthusiastic officers of the National Guard can keep up working organizations in peace, there is justifiable hope that there will be no difficulty in filling the ranks at the outbreak of a popular war. With permanent appropriations of \$4,000,000 annually for the organized militia, there should be no repetition of the scenes at the large mobilization camps of the war with Spain. The State organizations should be prepared to report for duty uniformed, armed and equipped, and with a reasonable proportion of men with some previous experience and training in armories and camps of instruction. This was the case with comparatively few of the regiments in 1898. The optimistic friends of the recent legisla-

tion do not estimate, however, that the number of available organized militia answering a call for war will exceed 100,000.

As both the National Guard and volunteers are dependent upon the regular army for their models of organization, equipment and drill, it is very necessary that the organization of the war army should be fixed during peace and on lines of such simplicity as to be easily assimilated by new volunteer organizations.

The staff of an army should be based on the organization and strength of the line, with such additions as are required to provide for the first call in a war of moderate magnitude. Legislation for the army staff should include models for the militia staff, which has never had any homogeneous organization in the various States nor any proper provisions for its business training and calling into service in time of war.

The Constitution places upon Congress the authority to raise and support armies. With this authority there goes the right to full and complete knowledge as to the use of the means and money provided for military purposes by that body. Under this view, Congress has deemed it wise to place limitations from time to time upon the use of appropriations, and in this way a mass of minor provisions have come to tease the army in the administration of its affairs. The Articles of War and the Army Regulations were all that was needed formerly to carry on the business of the army. Now, however, the many technical restrictions contained in appropriations, together with the steadily growing volume of comptrollers' decisions, have cast a pall of doubt and uncertainty over all army administration, involving disbursements, which even the orders of the Secretary of War may not surcease. There is no such thing as a profit-and-loss account in army business. The constantly growing volume of paper work, known to the public as "red tape," makes it well-nigh impossible for the average officer not provided with a full office equipment to take up disbursing work in the field with any hope of having his returns passed unquestioned through the War Department and the treasury. To the untrained staff officer called suddenly into active service from a business career, the army system seems a hopeless tangle, and he soon learns that it is only those who escape accountability for public funds and stores who may depart in peace.

At the close of every war of magnitude, nations draw conclusions as to the causes of success and not infrequently assign much importance to insignificant details and draw general conclusions from isolated experiences. Much academic discussion has been had concerning the influence of various models of guns and small-arms, the relative invisibility of uniforms and as to the comparative value of bayonet and sabre, all important details but trivial in comparison to the higher questions that must be solved for each campaign so long as success of armies is the goal.

To plan the organization or reorganization of an army capable of passing automatically from a peace to a war establishment requires a detailed study of many problems and a training in line and staff duty which has only become possible to American officers in recent years following the establishment of the General Staff.

In the past there has been no continuing body whose duty it was to keep pace with modern theories and inventions and to prepare military information in an available manner for the War Department as a whole. Congress has not wanted for advice, but in the confusion arising from conflicting opinions, often based on selfish interests, it is not surprising that military legislation has so generally consisted of a grouping of ragged compromises. All this should gradually change and such confidential relation be established between the War Department and Congressional Committees that the former may be wholly relied upon for professional assistance, leaving to the Congress the establishment of the national military policy into which the technical details shall be properly interwoven. The Congress may be generally depended upon for the enactment of legislation proper for the country's defence and for the organization of its military forces whenever the subjects are presented for consideration in a business-like way and without the antagonism so frequently arising from personal views or pride of corps.

If Americans are ever called upon to fight for national existence against a combination of foreign foes, it is possible that volunteers would exceed the available guns, but there is nothing in our past history to justify the claim. The bounty and draft records sadly discount the orators on this subject.

Our nation is committed, historically, to the volunteer system

in peace and war. No prominent American with political aspirations has ever presumed to advocate compulsory military training, yet there can be no doubt that the adoption of State laws requiring instruction in the duties of citizenship, coupled with service in the National Guard for at least one year before exercising the right to vote, would in a few years qualify the rising generations to better comprehend and rightly value the generous liberty vouchsafed to them by the Republic.

In time of peace, no one advocates conscription for the regular army, but there has long prevailed a sincere sentiment that in the organization of its army for war the Southern Confederacy proceeded upon right lines. It is the only fair way to render a return for the nation's guarantee of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. A nation is not justified in accepting the voluntary service of its best blood, leaving others to pursue untrammelled their business careers. The volunteer and the bounty systems fall short of a fair distribution of the personal debt due a nation. The right of a rich man to buy the services of a poor man as his substitute in war ought to be branded as one of the shameless practices of the Civil War to be forever banished by a Government which has as its corner-stone the political equality of men.

The Civil War confused the Constitution-makers, who never could be brought to acknowledge the correctness of Washington's estimate of the fatal weakness of a military system based upon the availability of the untrained masses to meet national emergencies. It cost much in blood and treasure to train the great armies of the Civil War, which in the end became regulars in all but name and the equals in battle of any troops in the world. The records show many instances of regiments fighting courageously after sustaining losses of from fifty to eighty per cent. of those engaged.

That American armies of the future will be more difficult to discipline than those of the past must be apparent to thoughtful men who daily witness the decadence of respect of the rising generation for those in authority. Americans are warlike when aroused, but are not a military nation in the sense of submitting to a general and patriotic preparation for war. The cult of enthusiasm for the flag, so wide-spread in recent years, does not contain the fibre demanded by a gruelling war of long duration.

American military problems differ materially from those of any other nation. In some respects the system of England is akin to ours, but in practice our needs are to be met only by original investigation of peculiar conditions and the application of laws designed to meet them.

Experience in all our wars has taught conclusively that it is not enough to have full organizations at the beginning of field operations. Some system of keeping the ranks of regiments filled during war must be provided. For more than a century this has always been a weak link in the military chain and it has generally broken at critical moments. Abounding evidence of this exists in the history of the Civil War, yet we are still depending upon the system of general recruitment in war which failed so lamentably then.

When history is searched with reference to specific causes of failure or lack of full success, it is surprising how much may be justly attributed to improper employment of the several arms, having due regard to the nature of the theatre of operations and to national traits and aptitudes. Generals seldom have an opportunity for acquiring a practical knowledge of the employment of all the arms until war brings actual field experience. In this respect the navy has a marked advantage over the army, for the reason that vessels in commission are always on a war basis and when assembled in fleets they have only to practise the manœuvres of war. No part of the army or National Guard ever appears at manœuvres or camps of instruction on a war basis.

We do not need a large army, but we must have one well trained and of sufficient size to meet existing requirements. We are extravagant with fortifications and stingy with men. We should begin without further delay to plan division cantonments to replace isolated forts and barracks which have outlived their strategical usefulness. The cost of a well-equipped, modestly built cantonment for a normal division of three infantry brigades and the proper contingent of other arms would be greatly offset by the saving in transportation of supplies and in assembling troops for manœuvres every alternate year. It will be the least expensive way of teaching both regulars and National Guard the business of war in all but actual combat. In event of hostilities such cantonments would be invaluable as places of assembly for the volunteers contemplated in the second call to aid



the regulars and National Guard. The ease with which new regiments could be prepared for service at such establishments would put to shame the large camps of the war with Spain.

We are not competing with other nations in an extravagant policy of military and naval expansion. If we would avoid much of the waste inseparable from going to war without due preparation, we must be ready with a complete system for passing from a peace to a war establishment. Thus only may we avoid a repetition of the humiliation of having masses of patriotic men in unsanitary camps, qualifying for the pension roll through lack of previous training in all that makes the soldier fit and worthy of the name.

Nearly every war of consequence has shown that when fairly matched armies confront each other, success usually follows some innovation in organization and tactics, traceable frequently to an individual. The nation which has gone to war with the organization, equipment and tactics of its last war, or of a previous generation, has usually encountered initial defeat.

With abundant and splendid material for soldiers and effective arms, wisdom, expediency and policy alike dictate that we should sleeplessly face the problem of simplifying and perfecting our administration, organization and tactics, to the end that the new army of regulars, organized militia and volunteers may pass automatically from a peace to a war basis.

Success in war depends upon military preparedness, which in turn is based upon organized military resources. Loyal men, physically fit and trained, properly provided with war materials and sustained by the moral support of the nation and a continually replenished treasury, constitute the only guarantee of victory and avoidance of national humiliation.

WILLIAM H. CARTER, U.S.A.